United Nations A/71/185

General Assembly

Distr.: General
22 July 2016

Original: English

Seventy-first session
Item 15 of the provisional agenda*
The role of the United Nations in promoting a new global human order

The role of the United Nations in promoting a new global human order

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 69/202, highlights the efforts of the United Nations system to reduce inequality and promote human development globally, in particular in the context of the post-2015 development agenda. The report first reviews recent levels and trends in inequalities of opportunity and outcome and their impacts on social and economic development. It then provides a succinct assessment of how the question of inequality has been addressed in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 and the Paris Agreement, and reviews the work of the United Nations system in taking better account of and addressing inequality at the global level. The report concludes with a set of recommendations for promoting the new global human order within the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

* A/71/150.

16-12744 (E) 020816

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I. Introduction

1. The concept of a new global human order, which was first proposed by the Government of Guyana at the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen in 1995, has since been supported by a number of international forums, including the Caribbean Community, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Group of 77 and China.

2. The new global human order was first discussed in the General Assembly during the South Summit held in Havana in April 2000. In its resolution 55/48, the Assembly took note of the Declaration of the South Summit (A/55/74, annex I), which stressed, inter alia, the need for a new global human order aimed at reversing the growing disparities between rich and poor both among and within countries through the promotion of growth with equity, the eradication of poverty, the expansion of productive employment and the promotion of gender equality and social integration.

3. Many of the elements of the new global human order echoed the outcomes of the World Summit for Social Development, the Millennium Summit and other development conferences of the time. These elements, in particular eradicating poverty, putting people at the centre of development efforts, combating inequality and promoting inclusion, are again found in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (see General Assembly resolution 70/1).

4. In the present report, recent levels and trends in inequality and their impacts on social and economic development are reviewed to set the context for considering the role of the United Nations in promoting a new global human order. The report then provides a succinct assessment of how the question of inequality has been addressed in the formulation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (General Assembly resolution 69/313, annex), the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 (resolution 69/283, annex II) and the Paris Agreement (see FCCC/CP/2015/L.9/Rev.1). It concludes with a set of recommendations for promoting the new global human order.

II. Overview of the situation of inequality

5. The discussion of inequality distinguishes three aspects of the concept: (a) "within-country inequality", which refers to the gap between the rich and the poor within each country; (b) "international inequality" or "between-country inequality", which refers to the differences between countries in terms of average income or output, assuming that there is no inequality within each country, that is, each person in each country has the same income or output; and (c) "global inequality", which refers to inequality across world individuals, taking into account within- and between-country inequality forces.[1]

6. Within countries, in addition to the vertical inequality between individuals according to their income group, two other dimensions of inequality are also part of the debate: horizontal inequality between social groups, and spatial inequality between areas of residence and regions.

[1] Branko Milanovic, "Global inequality recalculated: The effect of new PPP estimates on global inequality and 2005 estimates", *Journal of Economic Inequality*, vol. 10, No. 1 (2012), pp. 1-18.

7. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development considers inequality as a broad concept that goes beyond income and wealth inequality and includes all aspects of social, political and economic exclusion. This multidimensional nature of inequality is recognized in the discussion on inequality, which also distinguishes between inequality of outcomes, as measured by disparities in levels of various material outcomes, such as income, wealth and expenditure; and inequality of opportunities, as manifested in various forms of social exclusion, including differences in access to decent employment, education, health care and social and financial services.

A. Trends in inequality of outcomes

8. Income inequality is the most used indicator of inequality of outcomes because it is one of the most visible and measurable aspects of inequality. Moreover, income is the joint outcome of many social and economic factors such as human capital, productivity, labour market conditions, inequality in wages (such as the gender wage gap) and other institutional aspects (including professional associations, collective bargaining or its absence, minimal wage laws, etc.). This is particularly true in market-dominated economies.

9. Income inequality is typically measured by the Gini[2] index of the distribution of income, or by comparing the income shares of different income subgroups in the population (for example, by decile or quintile).

10. For the first time in almost 200 years, global income inequality has started a slight downward trend in the past decade, with the Gini index of income decreasing by 1.4 points between 2002 and 2008. However, global inequality is still at a very high level and much greater than inequality within any country: the global Gini index was estimated to be slightly below 0.7 in 2008, as compared to slightly over 0.6 in South Africa, the world's most unequal country, and 0.4 in the Russian Federation and United States of America, the countries with the highest income inequalities in the developed world. The level of global inequality is such that the richest 8 per cent owns half the income of the whole world, as compared to the richest 22 per cent taking half the income of the whole country in the United States.[3]

11. More than two thirds of global inequality is explained by intercountry disparities in per capita income and only a third by inequality within countries. Thus, "location" (country of birth or country of residence), and not socioeconomic status or class, is responsible for the major share of global income inequality.[4] The high level of global inequality shows that there are still large differences in income between countries.

12. The recent declining trend is related to rising average incomes in some emerging economies, especially in populous China and India, as a result of their high rates of economic growth during the last three decades. This growth lifted hundreds of millions of people out of poverty and made the mean per capita

[2] The Gini index (or coefficient) measures the degree of deviation from a perfectly equal distribution of the income distribution among individuals or households within an economy. A Gini coefficient varies between 0 and 1, with a value of 0 representing perfect equality and a value of 1 implying absolute inequality.

[3] Branko Milanovic, "Global income inequality in numbers: In history and now", *Global Policy*, vol. 4, No. 2 (2013), pp. 198-208.

[4] Ibid.

incomes of these developing countries converge towards that of advanced economies. In contrast to the progress in income convergence between Asia (and to a lesser extent Latin America) and the developed regions, the average per capita income has not changed in Africa (about 12 per cent of per capita income in developed countries since 1990) and has slightly regressed in Oceania (going from 15 per cent of per capita income in developed countries in 1990 to 14 per cent in 2014).[5]

13. Similarly to global inequality, international inequality in income distribution increased steadily between 1980 and 2000 (from around 0.52 to 0.58), and has slightly declined since then to reach 0.56 in 2010, when measured by the unweighted average of the Gini indexes of the per capita GDP of each country. When the Gini values are weighted by population size, and when China is excluded from the computations, the level of international inequality is higher but follows the same trend patterns as above.[6]

14. Although global and international inequalities in income are falling, disparities within countries are widening in half the countries of the world. Between 1990 and 2012, Gini indexes of the distribution of disposable income (income remaining after taxes and other charges are deducted) rose in 65 out of 130 countries with available data.[7] More than two thirds of the world's population reside in these countries. Income inequality has generally increased in countries and regions that enjoyed relatively low levels of inequality in 1990, such as the large majority of developed countries (including Nordic countries with traditionally low levels of inequality) and some large, emerging countries in Asia, Africa and Eastern Europe. The Gini index rose in 17 out of 22 countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) with data, going on average from 0.29 in the mid-1980s to 0.32 in 2013.[8] Similarly, income inequality rose in 18 out of 31 countries with data in Asia (a region that has historically experienced lower inequality than other developing regions) between 1990 and 2012, especially in China, where the Gini index went from 0.256 to 0.352.[9]

15. In contrast, income inequality has declined in many countries that still suffer from high inequality, located mainly in Latin America, the region with the highest level of income inequality in the world. In Latin America, the average Gini index fell from 0.507 in 2010 to 0.491 in 2014, that is, by 0.8 per cent per year, as a result of a significant change in the index in 9 of the 16 countries with data.[10] Using night lights as a proxy for income, a study found that the Gini index for inequality rose during the decade between 1992 and 2003 but then fell steadily between 2004 and

[5] Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, "Technical paper for ECOSOC Special Meeting on Inequality" (New York, 2016). Available from www.un.org/ecosoc/sites/www.un.org.ecosoc/files/files/en/2016doc/inequality-meeting-technical-paper.pdf.

[6] *Report on the World Social Situation 2013: Inequality Matters* (United Nations publication, Sales No. 13.IV.2).

[7] Ibid.

[8] OECD, *In It Together: Why Less Inequality Benefits All* (Paris, 2015).

[9] Asian Development Bank, *Asian Development Outlook 2012: Confronting Rising Inequality in Asia* (2012).

[10] Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, *Social Panorama of Latin America* (2015). Available from http://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/39964/1/S1600226_en.pdf.

2012 across countries in Africa,[11] the region that contains 7 of the 10 most unequal countries in the world.

16. Economic growth and policy reforms that raised tax revenues, direct cash transfers to families in need and minimum wages were the main factors contributing to the decline in Latin America's inequality levels. In Brazil, for example, these factors, in conjunction with favourable demographic trends such as a decline in fertility levels and the accompanying fall in dependency ratios, as well as improved access to education, helped to reduce inequality. In particular, the workforce gained more equal access to education starting in the 1990s, allowing the country to benefit from its demographic window of opportunity.

17. Income ratios between the top and bottom groups of the national income distribution reveal a similar pattern. Between the mid-1980s and 2010, the average disposable income of the richest 10 per cent went from 7 times higher to 9.5 times higher than the income of the poorest 10 per cent of the population across OECD countries.[12] In South Africa, where the value of the Gini index is the highest among all countries, the income of the richest 10 per cent of the population grew to become 47 times as high as the income of the poorest 10 per cent in the late 2000s. In Latin America, by contrast, the per capita income of the richest 10 per cent of the population fell from 15.6 times to 14 times as great as that of those in the poorest 40 per cent between 2010 and 2014.[13]

18. It should be pointed out that in countries where inequality has narrowed, it remains at a very high level. In countries where inequality has widened, it has done so mainly because the income of the top earners has increased faster in both developed and developing countries. In other words, economic growth has increasingly benefited disproportionately the already better-off in society, thus widening the gap between the rich and the poor. Of the total growth in incomes (before taxes) that occurred between 1975 and 2012, the proportions that went to the top 1 per cent of income earners were very high in a number of developed countries: 47 per cent in the United States, 37 per cent in Canada and over 20 per cent in Australia and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. In other countries, the fruits of economic growth have tended to go more towards the top 10 per cent of income earners than towards the lowest 10 per cent.[14] In practice, it is the middle class that has suffered the most from widening inequality, as demonstrated by the decline in the share of labour income — the predominant source of income for the majority of households — accruing to the middle fifth (middle 20 per cent) of households in many advanced economies and some large emerging market economies.[15]

19. A number of factors contribute to rising inequality of outcomes, including a wide gap between the wages of high- and low-income workers; fewer cash transfers

[11] Anthony Mveyange, "Night lights and regional income inequality in Africa", Working Paper No. 2015/085 (United Nations University, World Institute for Development Economics Research, 2015).

[12] OECD, *Divided We Stand: Why Inequality Keeps Rising* (Paris, 2011).

[13] Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, *Social Panorama of Latin America* (2015).

[14] Brian Keely, "What's happening to income inequality?" in *Income Inequality: The Gap Between Rich and Poor* (OECD Publishing, Paris, 2015).

[15] Era Dabla-Norris and others, "Causes and consequences of income inequality: A global perspective", Staff Discussion Note SDN/15/13 (International Monetary Fund, 2015).

provided by the State; financial globalization, and foreign direct investment in particular, which can affect the level and dispersion of wages; technological change and the ensuing shifts in the skill requirements of jobs (increasing share of technology-intensive manufacturing in Asia, for instance); and rent-seeking behaviour, which tends to disproportionately allocate resources to the rich at the expense of the poorest.

B. Trends in inequality of opportunities

20. Another dimension of inequality is inequality of opportunities, which manifests itself in various forms of social exclusion and is typically measured by differences in access to services and indicators of outcomes resulting from such access. This aspect of inequality is often related to circumstances that are beyond one's control, such as gender, age, ethnicity, race, indigenous status, immigrant status, disability, country of birth, place of residence and family background, among others. Inequality of opportunities is critical in reducing inequality of outcomes.

21. Indeed, large disparities in health, educational and financial services in terms of outcomes and access still exist across and within countries. In general, outcomes resulting from access to these services are much better in higher-income countries than in lower-income countries. For instance, in 2015, the maternal mortality ratio was only 12 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births in developed regions compared to 546 and 176 maternal deaths in sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia, respectively. That is, the level of maternal mortality was 46 times as high in sub-Saharan Africa and 15 times as high in Southern Asia as in the developed regions. Similarly, great inequities in child mortality remain between rich and poor countries despite substantial narrowing of the absolute gap since 1990. In 2015, children born in sub-Saharan Africa were 12 times more likely than their counterparts in high-income countries to die before their fifth birthday.[16] Although the difference in the average years of schooling completed between developed countries and developing countries has declined in the past 50 years, in 2010 that average was still four years higher in the former (11.3 years) than in the latter (7.2 years).[17]

22. Within countries, inequalities in health outcomes and health-care access exist mainly in developing countries, but also in some developed countries. Factors such as income, mother's education, birthplace, race and ethnicity continue to determine a child's survival chance. In the United States, infant survival is closely linked to race: infants born to African-American parents are more than twice as likely to die as those born to white parents. In developing countries, children from the poorest households are twice as likely to be chronically malnourished and to die before their fifth birthday as children from the richest households. Across much of sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia, children born to mothers with no education are almost three times more likely to die before they are five than those born to mothers with a secondary education. In developing countries, disparities in utilization of health care during and after the birth of a child mirror social disparities in child survival. On

[16] Inter-Agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation, *Estimation, Levels and Trends in Child Mortality: Report 2015* (UNICEF, New York, 2015).

[17] *Report on the World Social Situation 2013: Inequality Matters* (United Nations publication, Sales No. 13.IV.2).

average, women from the richest 20 per cent of households were still more than twice as likely as those from the poorest 20 per cent to have a skilled health-care practitioner present at birth delivery in 2015.[18]

23. Similarly, educational outcomes and access differ by level of income, mainly in developing countries but also in some developed countries. For example, in the United States, the gap in educational outcomes between rich and poor is widening as the cost of education is rising at all levels, from kindergarten to tertiary levels. In least developed countries, there are wide gaps in school attendance by income: nearly 90 per cent of children from the richest 20 per cent of households attend primary school, compared to only 60 per cent of children from the poorest 20 per cent of households.[19] In Latin America, educational attainment gaps between income quintiles remain wide despite substantial progress in increasing education levels: the proportion of youth completing secondary education is around 80 per cent among the richest quintile, compared to just 34 per cent in the poorest quintile of the population.[20]

24. Worldwide, youth, older persons, women and girls, indigenous peoples, persons with disability, rural residents and migrants continue to face inequalities in health, education and employment outcomes. They also face challenges in accessing quality health care, schooling, formal employment and financial and other social services, even in countries where such services are theoretically available to all citizens. Differences between urban and rural areas or between regions, also called spatial inequality, tend to be high and are a major contributor to overall inequality in many developing countries. For instance, children born in rural areas are almost twice as likely to die before age five as children born in urban areas.[21]

C. Impact of inequality on socioeconomic development[22]

25. While it is accepted that a moderate level of inequality is beneficial to economic growth, high levels of income inequality and wide disparities in access to education, health, decent employment and other services have been shown to have harmful effects on a range of socioeconomic outcomes that include economic growth, levels of poverty, sustainability of development, education and health outcomes, democracy, social cohesion and peace.

26. Rising income inequality and social, political and economic injustices tend to undermine the growth process by contributing to economic instability. At the same time, economic growth is less effective in reducing poverty in high-inequality countries. The people who are at the bottom of the income distribution are very poor and do not usually have access to safe water and sanitation, electricity, adequate housing, education, health care and formal and decent jobs, which prevents improvements in their capabilities and productivity. Because of the lack of

[18] UNICEF, *The State of the World's Children 2016: A Fair Chance for Every Child* (2016).

[19] UNICEF, *The State of the World's Children 2015: Reimagine the Future — Innovation for Every Child*, executive summary (2014).

[20] Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, *Social Panorama of Latin America* (2015).

[21] UNICEF, *The State of the World's Children 2016: A Fair Chance for Every Child* (2016).

[22] For a more detailed analysis, see *Report on the World Social Situation 2013: Inequality Matters* (United Nations publication, Sales No. 13.IV.2).

opportunities, they cannot participate in productive activities and as a result, they are trapped in a vicious circle of low human capital, low productivity and poverty.

27. High economic inequality can lead to social exclusion, political instability and social and political strife owing to economic polarization and a feeling of exclusion. Members of certain social groups in vulnerable situations such as women, youth, older persons, rural residents, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, racial minorities and migrants are the ones who tend to be disproportionately affected by high social, economic and political inequalities. They also tend to be more exposed and vulnerable to environmental hazards, including those prompted by climate change.[23]

28. At the international and global levels, the adverse effects of climate change hurt and will hurt low-income, African and least developed countries the most, thereby increasing and perpetuating inequalities.[24] Glaring inequality in social and economic outcomes and opportunities among countries calls for global action that is seen as a moral imperative, as articulated in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

III. Efforts of the United Nations system to reduce inequality and promote human development globally

29. The United Nations system strives to assist countries in their efforts to eradicate poverty, and to strengthen global partnerships in support of peace and security, human rights and development for all. The present section focuses on the role of the United Nations system in promoting a new global human order through its analytical and normative work.

30. The past year has been a transformative one for addressing inequalities in terms of international standard-setting and norms. The international community, led by States Members of the United Nations and supported by the United Nations system, has focused intently on establishing an international agenda that will determine the nature of development until 2030. This new direction has been captured in several highly important global policy documents that jointly define the pathway to a sustainable future for all: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the third International Conference on Financing for Development; the Paris Agreement of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 of the Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction.

A. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and inequality

31. In the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by the General Assembly on 25 September 2015, the international community placed high priority on addressing inequality. States Members of the United Nations promised to leave no one behind in meeting the Sustainable Development Goals, emphasizing the need

[23] "Technical paper for ECOSOC Special Meeting on Inequality" (see footnote 5 above).

[24] Ibid.

to take inequality into account in all dimensions when assessing progress. In the 2030 Agenda, countries resolved to combat inequalities within and among countries. The fight against inequalities, as expressed in the Sustainable Development Goals, is a fight for human dignity, which is essential to the well-being of each person and central to sustainable development. Importantly, generational equality is a major aspect of the 2030 Agenda, which is intended to benefit present and future generations and eliminate the conditions that can sustain inequalities between generations.

32. The 2030 Agenda recognizes that inequalities are increasing throughout the world. Driving this increase are factors such as natural environmental shocks, migration, poverty, unemployment, violent conflicts, humanitarian crisis and gender inequality.

33. It stresses the significance of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. In addition, it highlights the vulnerable and unequal situation faced by children, youth, persons with disabilities, older persons, indigenous peoples, refugees and internally displaced persons and migrants.

34. Sustainable Development Goal 10 explicitly calls for the reduction of inequality within and among countries. The targets associated with Goal 10 include achieving and sustaining income growth of the bottom 40 per cent of the population; social, economic and political inclusion of all; equal opportunity and reduction of inequalities of outcome; and more just and equitable international financial institutions, including special and differential treatment for developing countries, especially the least developed countries.

35. Inequality is a cross-cutting issue in the 2030 Agenda. Most of the Sustainable Development Goals and their targets are linked to inequality through the use of terms such as "inclusive", "equitable", "for all" and "access". The Agenda calls for ending poverty and hunger and other forms of deprivation. It calls for ensuring that everyone can live a healthy life with equitable access to quality education. The Goals promote the principle that everyone should have access to sustainable energy, water and sanitation, full and productive employment and justice and peace.

36. Gender equality is an important issue addressed in the 2030 Agenda. Efforts to improve it appear not just in Goal 5, which is devoted to this issue in particular, but also across a number of other goals and targets. Gender equality is called for in goals on eradication of poverty and hunger, health, education, water and sanitation, employment and cities and human settlements. While some targets emphasize equal access between men and women and the elimination of gender disparities, others pay particular attention to women.

B. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda and inequality

37. Inequality is a cross-cutting issue in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the outcome document of the third International Conference on Financing for Development, held in Addis Ababa from 13 to 16 July 2015. According to the Action Agenda, ending or reducing inequality requires delivering social protection and essential public services; ending hunger and malnutrition; promoting gender equality; protecting ecosystems; investing in children and youth, persons with disabilities, older persons and indigenous people; generating full and productive

employment for all; and promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialization.[25] The Action Agenda recognizes that inequalities have worsened in many countries, and that special efforts are needed to address this issue throughout the world, including developed countries, African countries, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, as well as middle-income countries. It acknowledges that the least developed countries have been marginalized by foreign direct investment, and that many countries lack access to finance. To address this, Member States commit themselves to working with private sector actors and development banks to increase access to finance for micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises. Reducing inequality will require policies that promote financial stability, social inclusion, growth and jobs, knowledge-sharing, energy efficiency and climate change mitigation. Countries have committed themselves to a new social compact that will provide social protection for all and is fiscally sustainable.

38. It is important to note that illicit financial flows and corruption reduce the amount of resources available to fight inequality. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda sees this as a major impediment to equality. It calls for combating tax evasion, enhanced disclosure practices and transparency. It notes the report of the High-level Panel on Illicit Financial Flows from Africa (see www.uneca.org/publications/illicit-financial-flows#) and calls upon other regions to replicate the African initiative. The Action Agenda calls upon the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the United Nations to provide assistance in this regard. Furthermore, it calls for countries to ratify and accede to the United Nations Convention against Corruption, and expresses support for the Stolen Asset Recovery Initiative of the United Nations and the World Bank.

39. In the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, Member States promise to increase full and equal access to formal financial services for all. They will seek to enhance the budgeting process by increasing transparency, equal participation and gender-responsive budgeting and tracking.

40. The Action Agenda also promotes the equal rights of women and girls to economic resources, including equal pay for equal work, protection against abuse in the workplace and discrimination, increased investments in female-owned companies or businesses and ownership of land and property.

C. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 and inequality

41. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 was adopted at the Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, held in Sendai, Japan, from 14 to 18 March 2015. It addresses issues critical to reducing inequalities. It calls upon all of society to participate in disaster risk reduction, including through empowerment and inclusive, accessible and non-discriminatory participation, with special focus on the poorest. Policies and practices in disaster reduction must integrate gender, age, disability and cultural perspective.

[25] *Monitoring Commitments and Actions*, Inaugural Report 2016, Inter-agency Task Force on Financing for Development (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.16.I.7).

42. In the Sendai Framework, Member States commit to focus on the design and implementation of inclusive policies and social safety-net mechanisms. They will ensure that community involvement is a main part of disaster prevention and response and that everyone, especially people living in poverty and individuals in vulnerable situations, has access to livelihood programmes, basic health-care services and housing and education.

43. The Sendai Framework highlights the need of developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States, landlocked developing countries and African countries, as well as middle-income and other countries confronting serious disaster risk challenges, for "adequate, sustainable and timely provision of support, including through finance, technology transfer and capacity-building from developed countries and partners tailored to their needs and priorities, as identified by them" (General Assembly resolution 69/283, annex II, para. 19 (m)).

D. The Paris Agreement and inequality

44. The Paris Agreement was adopted on 12 December 2015 at the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The Agreement confirms the connections between climate change and equitable access to sustainable development and poverty eradication. It aims to reduce inequalities between countries in the fight against climate change. The Paris Agreement highlights the principle of equity and common but differentiated responsibilities and capabilities among countries. In this context, the Paris Agreement calls for more efforts to help developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing States, with adaptation, loss and damage, finance, technology development and transfer and capacity-building.

E. Strategies and policy approaches to tackle inequality at the global level

45. Reducing inequalities requires systematic action by the international community. To this end, the United Nations system has carried out a number of policy-oriented initiatives, of which some examples are provided below.

46. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat analysed the social and economic impacts of inequality and proposed action-oriented policy recommendations to tackle inequality in its publication entitled *Report on the World Social Situation 2013: Inequality Matters*. In addition to discussing inequality in society at large, the report puts a particular spotlight on inequality in the context of the situation of disadvantaged social groups. It concludes that inequality is not inevitable and could be addressed by implementing inclusive social and economic policies and institutions, following the examples of countries that have been able to reduce inequalities even in times of global economic and financial crisis.

47. The Department also provided technical and substantive support to the Economic and Social Council in convening a special meeting on inequality on 30 March 2016 at United Nations Headquarters in New York. The special meeting brought together leading experts from academia, Governments, the private sector,

the United Nations system and other stakeholders to identify policy options and approaches for reducing inequality. Participants reviewed the main factors driving inequality and made recommendations to addressing high or rising inequality.

48. In April 2016, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) issued a report entitled "Innocenti Report Card 13, Fairness for Children: a league table of inequality in child well-being in rich countries", which showed evidence on inequality in education, life satisfaction and health. Ranking 41 countries of the European Union and OECD, the report highlighted that children's well-being is not an automatic result of individual circumstances or the degree of economic development. Instead, children's well-being is determined by policy choices. The report recommended several policy approaches: protect the incomes of households with the poorest children; improve the educational achievements of disadvantaged learners; promote and support healthy lifestyles for all children; take subjective well-being seriously; and place equity at the heart of child well-being agendas.

49. In March 2016, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) launched an innovative partnership with leading media houses, the "Step it Up for Gender Equality Media Compact". It unites various media outlets in print, broadcast and online news media to promote women's rights and gender equality in the context and framework of the Sustainable Development Goals. These media outlets will work to promote women's rights and gender equality issues through editorial articles; ensure that women are included as sources in stories produced; aim for gender parity; adopt a gender-sensitive code of conduct on reporting; and guarantee that women journalists are provided mentors and guidance for career advancement.

50. International Women's Day 2016 focused on "Planet 50-50 by 2030: Step It Up for Gender Equality". In order to achieve gender equality by 2030, calls were made to allocate more resources and greater political action. Adequate funding, bold advocacy, ensuring inclusive and quality education for all and committed political will were highlighted as necessary for gender equality. The international day was used to stress that accountability and measurable actions are critical for gender equality.

51. In 2014, the International Labour Organization (ILO) published a book entitled *Wage-led Growth: An Equitable Strategy for Economic Recovery*, which examined the increasing gap between rich and poor. The book discussed two functions of wages in economies led by the market: as a cost of production and as a source of demand and productivity. It highlighted the importance of looking at the role of wages in macroeconomic and growth policies. In another book published in 2015, entitled *Labour Markets, Institutions and Inequality*, ILO addressed reducing inequality through concerted political action that seeks to establish inclusive labour markets and social welfare institutions.

52. The Committee on Social Development of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) met in March 2016 to look at strengthening the social dimension of sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific. The Committee underscored the importance of addressing inequalities within and between countries and of addressing the impact of demographic change. It was during this meeting that ESCAP launched the publication entitled "Time for equality: the role of social protection in reducing inequalities in Asia and the Pacific". The report points out that inequality is on the rise in Asia and the Pacific.

Technological change and globalization are identified as factors underlying the rising inequalities within Asia. Unskilled workers are finding it difficult to function in the context of these changes.

53. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) published a report entitled "Inclusive social development: The next generation of policies for overcoming poverty and reducing inequality in Latin America and the Caribbean". This report was presented during the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, which took place in Lima in November 2015. The report acknowledged that in the last decade, Latin America and the Caribbean had made progress in various areas of social development, including reductions in levels of poverty, and a slight decline in inequality. However, the report characterized the current economic situation in the region as being difficult, especially with weak economic growth rates, and stressed that in terms of income distribution, Latin America and the Caribbean remained the most unequal region in the world.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

54. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Paris Agreement have given renewed emphasis to inclusive development, highlighting the need to focus on inequality. In addition to Sustainable Development Goal 10, the stand-alone goal on reducing inequality within and among countries, all the other Sustainable Development Goals are linked to inequality.

55. The 2030 Agenda addresses both inequalities of opportunities and inequalities of outcomes. It fully recognizes the multidimensional aspect of inequalities, in particular horizontal inequalities caused by social, political and economic exclusion of social groups based on age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin or religion.

56. Some progress has been made in the past 15 years in reducing global and international inequalities, but within countries, inequalities have tended to rise. Therefore, in order to achieve the visions of the 2030 Agenda and the new global human order, inequalities need to be tackled at both the national and the global levels.

57. In the context of successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the promotion of a new global human order calls for action in some key areas. In this regard, the General Assembly may wish to consider the following:

(a) Policies at the national level aimed at tackling inequality should ensure equal and universal access to basic social services, labour markets and social protection by, for instance, implementing social protection floors, extending the scope of social protection programmes, developing skills and addressing environmental risks;

(b) Policies to reduce inequality at the national level should also expand employment and decent work opportunities for all by creating decent jobs, addressing the vulnerability of people working in precarious jobs and the informal sector, and supporting small and medium-sized enterprises and cooperatives. In this context, disaggregated data are needed to better focus on

vulnerable social groups such as youth, older persons, indigenous people, persons with disabilities, families, women and girls and minority racial and ethnic groups, in order to address their concerns;

(c) Fiscal policies at the national level should ensure that the redistributive impacts of direct taxes and transfers support inequality reduction. Such fiscal policies must be an integral part of a strategy that will expand opportunities for, and improve capabilities of, disadvantaged or marginalized social groups and regions, particularly rural and remote areas;

(d) Institutions should be strengthened at all levels, including thorough broad-based multi-stakeholder participation, to support the reduction of inequality in all its dimensions within and across countries;

(e) To tackle inequalities at the global level, international cooperation should be further strengthened in areas such as international tax collaboration to reduce tax evasion and illicit flows, the regulation and monitoring of international financial markets, and reduction of migrant remittances costs. Particular attention should be given to the needs of least developed countries, small island developing States and landlocked developing countries through improved financial and technical assistance in order to reduce inequalities among and within countries;

(f) The United Nations system should continue its efforts to strengthen partnerships for sustainable development beneficial to all countries and to support Governments in pursuing inclusive public policies and institutions to ensure that the benefits of economic growth are broadly shared and that they reach those left furthest behind. The normative role of the United Nations should also be further strengthened in the context of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In this regard, functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council, the Commission for Social Development in particular, should play an active role in supporting thematic reviews pertaining to the issue of inequality conducted by the high-level political forum on sustainable development.